

'No Child Left Behind': Does It Apply to Ethnic Minority Students in Hong Kong?

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Introduction

- Much has been written about ethnic minority students in Hong Kong (e.g. Chong, 2011; Hong Kong Unison Limited, 2009, 2010, 2011; Hue, 2011; Kennedy, 2011a, 2011b; Kennedy & Hue, 2011; Loper, 2004; Novianti, 2007)
- The focus of these research has been on the provision of adequate education (Education Bureau [EdB], 2011a, 2011b; Education Commission [EC], 2000) and the extent to which such provisions meets the requirements of the Racial Discrimination Ordinance (Home Affairs Bureau [HAB], 2008).
- Little attention has been paid so far to the status of ethnic minority students ('immigrants' or 'citizens'), the entitlements that such status gives them in the Hong Kong context, the extent to which they are remain 'out of school ethnic minority children in Hong Kong (possibly as a result of their status) and the policy implications of these issues.

Ethnic Minority Students (EMSs) status in Hong Kong

- Are EMSs 'Chinese nationals'?

“In respect of Chinese Nationality Law, it is evident that it is not well equipped to cope with the inclusion of those not of Chinese origin; indeed, it creates an effectively racial barrier.” (White, 1987, p. 502)

- Is 'right of abode' or 'permanent residence' or 'Hong Kong Identity Card Holder' enough for EMSs in Hong Kong to have equal opportunities and rights to education?

Purposes of the Presentation

Three broad questions will be addressed in this presentation:

1. Who are ethnic minority students in Hong Kong?
2. How many are in school - from preschool to tertiary?
3. Who are the 'out of school' students?

What are the implications for students and for Hong Kong?

Ethnic Minority Students in Hong Kong

- Generally HKSAR refers ‘Ethnic Minorities’ to the people from non-Chinese ethnicities (Census and Statistics Department, 2007).
- about 5% (exact figure is 342198) of the total population of HKSAR are ethnic minorities mainly belonging to the ethnic group of Filipinos, Indonesians, White, Indians, Nepalese, Japanese, Thais, Pakistanis, Koreans and Bangladeshis etc. (Census and Statistics Department, 2007, p15).
- 11.1% of ethnic minority population born in Hong Kong but it does not provide further information on which age-group they are belonging to prominently (Census and Statistics Department, 2007, p34). it is assumed that all the school going children (9.4% age-group below 15) from ethnic minority groups predominantly born in Hong Kong. Nevertheless, there is no evidence for making this assumption and there is very little data on new arrivals from places like Nepal.
- only about 44.1% of total ethnic minority population have resided in Hong Kong for about 7 or more years (Census and Statistics Department, 2007, p34), which in other words means that, they have permanent residence status. This does also potentially mean that little over 50% of the ethnic minority population does not have any permanent residential status. What is their status?

Table 1: Ethnic Minorities by Ethnicity and Age group < 15

Ethnicity	Year			
	2006		2001	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Asian (other than Chinese)				
Filipino	2467	7.6	2680	7.0
Indonesian	226	0.7	165	0.4
Indian	3695	11.4	3690	9.7
Nepalese	2892	9.0	1305	3.4
Japanese	2867	8.9	3251	8.5

Thai	366	1.1	233	0.6
Pakistan	3826	11.8	3131	8.2
Korean	876	2.7	1423	3.7
Other Asian	721	2.2	736	1.9
sub-total	17936	55.5	16614	43.7
White	6002	18.6	9533	25.1
Mixed				
with Chinese Parent	6177	19.1	9573	25.2
Other Mixed	1887	5.8	2049	5.4
sub-total	8064	25.0	11622	30.5
others	287	0.9	279	0.7
total	32289	100.0	38048	100.0
whole population	939675		1109417	

Source: (Census and Statistics Department, 2007, p. 22-23)

- the age-group below 15 having a total number 32289, which is about 9.4% of the total ethnic minority population
- 32.2% EM below 15 age-group are from South Asian ethnicity (Indian, Pakistani, Nepalese etc.)
- 11.6% EM below 15 age-group are from Japanese and Korean Ethnicity
- There are about 41936 (about 12.2% of) EM population are under 15-24 age-group. South Asian EM account for 12.4% where Japanese and Korean EM are 2.1%.

The racial acceptance household survey (Census and Statistics Department, 2009) reported their result in four strata in terms of total ethnicities i.e. Chinese, Caucasians, Japanese/Koreans, Others (Indian, Pakistani, Nepalese, Indonesian, Philiphino, Malaysian, Bangladeshi,).

EMs in/out School

- Statistics on ethnic minority children are not consistent not only in education but also in other areas (Chung & Leung, 2011; Kennedy, 2011a).

Table 2: Ethnic Minority Students

	2006 [^]	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10
Level				
Pre-primary	6777	9242*	10214*	10013*
Primary	12879	5583*/5671#	6034*	6480*
Secondary	7036	3272*/3097#	3842*	4406*
Sixth form	737			
Post-secondary	1293			
Total	28722			

[^] (Census and Statistics Department, 2007)

* (Mrs. Shek, Education Officer, Education Commission, EDB.)

(Hong Kong SAR Government, 2008, pp 6-7)

Table 3: School Attendance Rates of Ethnic Minority Students by age-group

Age-group	Ethnic Minority		Whole Population	
	2001	2006	2001	2006
3-5	86	83.9	94.7	89.1
6-11	99.3	99.5	99.9	99.9
12-16	96	98	97.5	98.9
17-18	54.7	74.3	71	82.8
19-24	3.7	6.7	26.4	37.3
25	0.2	0.4	0.3	0.4
Aged 3 and over	9.7	9.5	21.4	20

Source: (Census and Statistics Department, 2007, p. 43)

From Table 3:

- About 16% Ethnic Minority Children were not attending to school in their pre-primary ages while this rate for whole population is 11%.
- There is also considerable gap in the school attendance rates of EMSs under age-group (17-18) compared to the whole population.
- The most important statistics from this table is the school attendance rate for EMSs at the age (19-24) is only 6.7% where the rate for whole population is 37.3%. These both age groups (17-18 and 19-24) are the time for potentially attending upper secondary schools and higher education.

Table 4: Ethnic Minority Students are at Full-time courses by age-group in 2006

Level	Ethnic Minority <15		Ethnic Minority Aged 15 and over at full time course	Whole population	
	Age group total	at full time course		<15	15 and over
Pre-primary		6777		166364	30
Primary		12819	60	439630	1484
Lower Secondary		3550	955	189183	78897
Upper Secondary		298	2233	1926	187454
Sixth form			737		62549
Post-secondary			1293		147014
Total	32289	23444	5278	797103 (939675)	477428

Source: (Census and Statistics Department, 2007, p. 51)

From table 4:

- The proportion of EMs studying full time courses in Hong Kong is about 4.0% in the year 2006, amongst them 2.9% belonged to the age-group below 15 and the rest are to age-group 15 and over.

- a total of 8845 students (18%) under the age-group below 15 are not in any full time courses at school. it can be assumed that they mainly belong to pre-primary, upper secondary and higher education group.

If we consider the primary enrolment figure (12819) is stable over time a number of interesting points could be made from this statistics (table 4):

1. About 48% EMSs are out of pre-primary education in Hong Kong.
2. Only 28% of primary-age cohort EMSs can move into lower secondary level.
3. About 19% and 6% of that cohort can make upper secondary and sixth form respectively.
4. The participation rate of that cohort in all sort of post-secondary education is only 10%.

EM Residential Location vs School Location

- The EM are mostly populated in Central and Western, Wan Chai, Yau Tsim Mong, Sham Shui Po, Kowloon cities, Islands (Census and Statistics Department, 2007; Chung & Leung, 2011)
- In terms of EMSs studying full-time courses in schools located all across the territory. Wan Chai, Central and Western, Sham Shui Po, Kowloon cities, Shatin, Yuen Long districts are having schools catering for more EMSs (Census and Statistics Department, 2007, P 53-54).

Out-of-School EM Children

- It is very clear from the analysis of the previous two Tables (3 & 4) that a good number of ethnic minority children are out-of-school in Hong Kong.
- While the above has referred to ‘out of school’ students in quantitative terms it is important to understand the construct, in a broader theoretical framework.
- Now we will discuss out-of-school children of ethnic minority groups in Hong Kong following the five Dimensions of Exclusion from education provided by UNICEF and the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2010).
- According to the framework, Dimension 1 considers children of pre-primary

school age who are not in pre-primary or primary school; Dimension 2 considers children of primary school age who are not in primary or secondary school; Dimension 3 considers children of lower-secondary school age who are not in primary or secondary school; Dimension 4 considers children who are in primary school but at risk of dropping out; and Dimension 5 considers children who are in lower-secondary school but at risk of dropping out.

- If we consider this for Hong Kong context, dimension 1 and dimension 3 definitely prevails in Hong Kong education in the case of EMSs based on the data and statistics available.
- It is not clear about dimension 2, because the particular age-group (6-11) specific population data is not available at the census report to reach into any conclusion.
- Since there is major transition issue from primary to lower secondary and lower secondary to upper secondary exists in school, therefore, it is fair to say that dimension 4 and 5 also prevails in Hong Kong education in the case of ethnic minority children.

EMSs facing Problems within School

While the above has discussed about the ethnic minority children who are out of school in Hong Kong, the following section discusses the issues and challenges that ethnic minority children face within school. This is very important in order to understand the 'out of school' construct fully.

Admissions

- Although the parents of EMSs are free to choose any type of school for their children's enrolment at primary 1 or secondary 1, but there is increasingly tendency that the number of designated schools is going higher who are pre-dominantly catering for EMSs. While the number of designated school was 15 in 2006/07, it has now reached to 30 (Education Bureau [EdB], 2011a).
- this designated schools concept has been highly criticized as a discriminatory approach itself mainly because of it reinforces segregation rather than integration (Equal Opportunities Commission [EOC, 2011], P7; Hong Kong Unison Limited, 2011).

- starting schools in a designated primary school is limiting the opportunities for the EMSs to get admission into a mainstream better secondary school in later stage only due to their less Chinese language efficiency (Hong Kong Unison Limited, 2009; Novianti, 2007).
- Equal Opportunities Commission (2011) asserted that this practice of mainstream schools refusing EMSs to admit in their schools due to their language deficiency is an indirect discrimination and violation of Race Discrimination Ordinance.

Language (subject and medium of instruction)

- Learning Chinese language has always been the issue for the EMSs in HK schools. In spite of repetitive requests from all the concerned parties to introduce an alternative Chinese language curriculum for EMSs or Chinese as a second language curriculum, the education bureau has been always reluctant in their response. Instead EdB is continuously emphasizing on their ‘The Supplementary Guide to the Chinese Language Curriculum for NCS Students’, which needs to be adopted by the school in order to meet the specific needs of the EMSs. This approach has been criticized publicly that it is only a framework and direction for teachers and nothing to deal with day to day teaching, and by adopting this approach EDB has actually shifted their responsibility towards teachers (Hong Kong Unison Limited, 2011). Although this particular language issue has been argued for ages, no pragmatic solution has yet been seen.
- It is positive that GCSE Chinese qualification for EMSs (on some condition) has now been recognized to get access into the higher education institute or job market, still there is concern that individual department requires higher proficiency which limits the choices of EMSs.

Assessment

- It has been straightly quoted as ‘unfair’ to set up same level of Chinese proficiency requirement for the EMSs in getting a place in school at the equal opportunities commission document (2011, p8).
- The report has also asserted that the existing assessment tools for identifying children with special needs were developed mainly for Chinese students. And it

has not considered cultural factors and language deficiencies of the EMSs. As a result EMSs with special needs are facing double challenges.

- There is a General Research Fund project entitled ‘Exploring Cultural Diversity in Chinese Classrooms: Can Assessment Environments Cater for the Needs of Ethnic Minority Students in Hong Kong’, [GRF-HKIEd840809] funded by the Hong Kong Research Grants Council going on, which has made couple of its pilot findings available to the public for the first time in a recent conference. It signals for an assessment environment with ‘more feedback’ and ‘praise for achievement’ will be especially supportive for EMSs (Kennedy, 2011a).

Curriculum

- The need for alternative or second language curriculum for Chinese language has been discussed in of the previous sub-sections. In addition, a strong demand for development of teaching and learning materials focusing on Chinese language needs of EMSs has been well argued (EOC, 2011; Hong Kong Unison, 2010, 2011).
- One more issue is whether the existing curriculum is culturally responsive towards EMSs has not been well researched yet which is another area to explore.

Teaching

- It is imperative that Hong Kong teachers feel higher efficacy while teaching EMSs compare to Chinese students and both groups can equally be engaged (Kennedy, Hue & Tsui, 2008). However, it has been reported that teachers in Hong Kong struggle in couple of areas related to EMSs education i.e. in fulfilling the diverse needs of students, developing partnerships with EMSs parents, broadening educational and career aspirations of EMSs (Hue, 2011).
- The issue of Hong Kong teachers to rethink in creating the kind of learning environments and modifying them in order to meet the needs of EMSs has been well emphasized (Kennedy, 2011a).

Resource support

- EdB (2011a, 2011b) has reported that they are providing grant support to both

designated and mainstream schools to support EMSs mainly in improving their Chinese language. But while designated schools are given grant to run schools-based support measures for the EMSs, mainstream schools are given grant only for running after schools Chinese learning.

- Moreover, it has been evidenced and reported that sometimes EdB's fund disbursement towards schools seem differences in treatment without justifiable and clear reasons (Hong Kong Unison Limited, 2011).

Supervision and Monitoring

- It is clear that significant amount of resources has been put in place to support EMSs in Hong Kong schools (EdB, 2011a, 2011b). But their appropriateness and adequacy are yet being highly criticized by all the interested parties. One of the reasons behind has been identified by Equal Opportunities Commission (2011) is the lack of quality assurance and central support from the EdB. Therefore, EOC (2011) urges EdB to establish a central quality assurance system so that the resources have been deployed to schools is being effectively used.

Overall Policy towards Multicultural Education in Hong Kong

- It is perceived that Confucian philosophy for equality or equity of education is somewhat different than the expectation of parents of the EMSs and some other stakeholders including community groups, researchers in this area (Kennedy, 2011b).
- However, the existing Government policy is only moving towards mono-cultural education according to Skerrett and Hargreaves (2008) framework of educational orientations to diversity (Kennedy, 2011b), while multicultural education has been highly recommended for a multicultural society (Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Ladson-Billings, 2007; Nieto, 2008; Pajares, 2007). But it is not necessary to adopt the western notion of multiculturalism (Kennedy, 2011a) as it has been well argued that Asia has its own distinctive type of traditions related to the diversity and the importance is given to developing local approaches to multiculturalism (Kymlicka, 1995, 2007; Kymlicka & He, 2005).
- One such has been argued 'social resilience' instead of 'multiculturalism' (Kennedy, 2011a) following the suggestion made in the context of Singapore

(Ramakrishna, 2008).

Total Scenario for EMSs in HKSAR

- A good number of EM Children is out-of-school
- Even who are in school is facing lot of challenges

The former has not got yet any attention, while some support measures are in place (although inadequate and inappropriate) for the later.

The important question is ‘why’? What could be done in this context?

Ethnic Minority Students: Possible Research Questions and Issues

The following framework reflects the areas of research relating to ethnic minority students in Hong Kong and also the questions that at this stage remain unanswered.

In School	Out of School
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Why there is continuing dissatisfaction with the schooling provided for ethnic minority students in Hong Kong?2. How well prepared are Hong Kong schools and teachers for meeting the needs of ethnic minority students?	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Can the concept of ‘out of school’ be applied to ethnic minority students in Hong Kong?2. Do current government policies recognize ‘out of school’ ethnic minority students?3. What do ‘out of school’ ethnic minority students do in Hong Kong, especially those who would normally be in secondary schooling?
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. How does the discourse of ‘integration’ influence the education policy agenda for ethnic minority students in Hong Kong?2. How would a policy agenda that focused on multiculturalism produce a different kind of education policy?	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. What rights do ethnic minorities have in Hong Kong?2. How have ethnic minorities or their representatives pushed for rights relating to education?3. How has any rights agenda for ethnic minority students been received in Hong Kong?

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